



Sign Ordinance Workshop

City of High Point, NC

Cooper Consulting Company, Inc.

Connie B. Cooper, FAICP and Eric Damian Kelly, PhD, JD, FAICP

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Workshop Agenda

- Introductions and Purpose of Workshop
- Why a New Sign Ordinance
- Quick Tour of Sign Types
- Keeping Your Sign Ordinance Legal
- Sign Recommendations
- Schedule for Completion of Sign Ordinance
- Brief Q & A
- Share Comments on Boards





Why Update Sign Ordinance?

Reasons for Update



- Sign laws have EVOLVED since 1992 (last major rewrite)
 - More emphasis on content neutral (more later)
- Key Needs
 - Strengthen linkages with City's Planning Objectives
 - Allow more creative signage Downtown
 - Reexamine sign sizes
 - Add illustrations and updated definitions
 - Reorganize sign standards based on context (location)

Signs Are an Important Part of High Point

Signs Can ...

- Identify places & businesses
- Advertise commodities or events
- Help in wayfinding / directions
- Allow people to express opinions
- Warn or direct



But Signs Can Create ...

- A distraction
- Visual clutter
- Traffic hazards
- A negative impression of City



Sign Regulations ...

Sign regulations are in
LOTS of places in the
Development Ordinance



- Ch. 2 – Admin.
 - Plng. & Dev. Director
 - Variances
- Ch. 3 – Zoning Districts
 - Planned Dev. Districts
 - Eastchester GCO District
- Ch. 4 – Uses
 - Live/Work Dwelling
 - Day Care
 - Visitor Accommodations
 - Home Occupations
- Ch. 5 – Dev. Standards
 - § 5.7 Signs
- Ch. 8 – Nonconformities
 - Cessation
 - Nonconforming Signs
- Ch. 10 – Measurements and Definitions:
 - Measurements
 - Definitions
- Build High Point
 - Common Sign Plan
- Sign Permitting Process

As Your Consultants, We Have ...

Listened and Looked ...

- Interviews with City planning & enforcement personnel, elected and appointed officials
- Two-day “listening” session with business and community leaders
- Surveyed citizens on viewpoints about certain types of signs
- Looked at existing signs in City

Analyzed ...

- Results of “Listening” sessions and Citizens’ Sign Survey
- Legal aspects of regulating signs
- City’s existing Sign Ordinance provisions





Quick Tour of Sign Types

How many different types of signs can you count?

Sign Types – Freestanding Signs





Freestanding – Monument Signs



Freestanding – Pole Signs



Freestanding – Hybrid Signs
(mix between pole and monument sign)

Sign Types – Building Signs



Banner /Blade Signs



Wall Signs



Marquee Sign



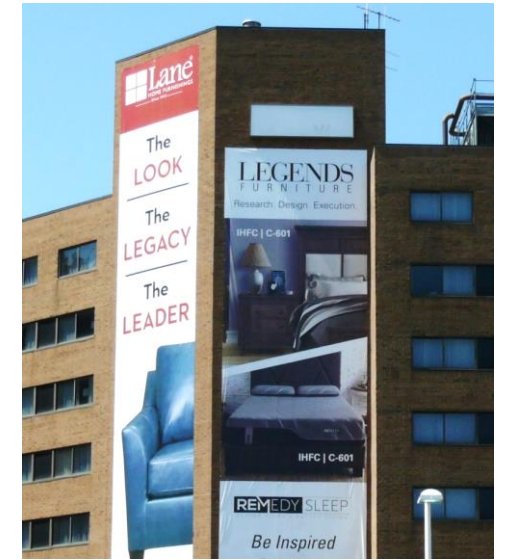
Roof Sign



Hanging Sign



Projecting Sign



Banner – Super Graphics



Canopy Sign



Awning Sign



Building Signs – Window Signs



Sign Characteristics – Illuminated Signs





Sign Characteristics

– Temporary Signs

Sign Characteristics – Electronic Signs





Prohibited Signs





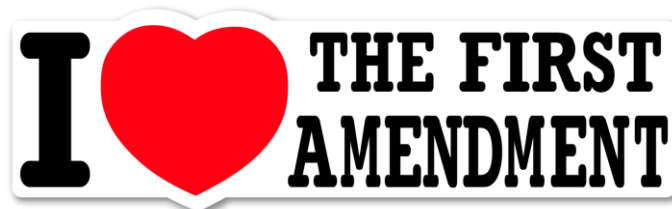
Keeping Your Sign Ordinance Legal

Legal Issues – First Amendment

Signs are protected by the First Amendment

First Amendment protects content but generally allows regulation of time, place and manner

- *Time*: regulate the hours of illumination or display
- *Place*: regulate the location, setbacks, pedestrian clearance, or distance from residential districts
- *Manner*: size and types of signs; prohibit signs that flash, blink, rotate, or scroll



Legal Issues – First Amendment (2)

Commercial vs Non-Commercial Speech

- Until the 1970s, the courts did not apply First Amendment principles to commercial speech
- Since then, commercial speech has been protected but non-commercial speech (political or religious, for example) has had preferred status





Legal Issues – First Amendment (3)

Reed vs. Town of Gilbert

- In 2015, Supreme Court in this Arizona case said that ANY content-based distinctions are unconstitutional
- Challenges – Sign ordinances have many content-based distinctions, particularly the difference between a political sign and a fast-food sign in the yard next door

Reed v. Town of Gilbert (US 2015)

Municipal sign code imposing more stringent restrictions on signs directing the public to the meeting of a non-profit group (a church) than on signs conveying other messages (such as political) is content-based regulation of speech that cannot survive the test of strict scrutiny.

Legal Issues – First Amendment (4)

Recommendation for High Point:

- Recommending elimination of content-based distinctions, most of which were eliminated by technical amendments earlier this year (2019)
- Assume courts will look back to years of precedent and grant greater protection to non-commercial speech, particularly in residential areas





Legal Issues –
Is Use of Logo Colors “Sign Size Creep”
or Simply a “Design Element?” (5)



Legal Issues – Art or Advertising? (6)

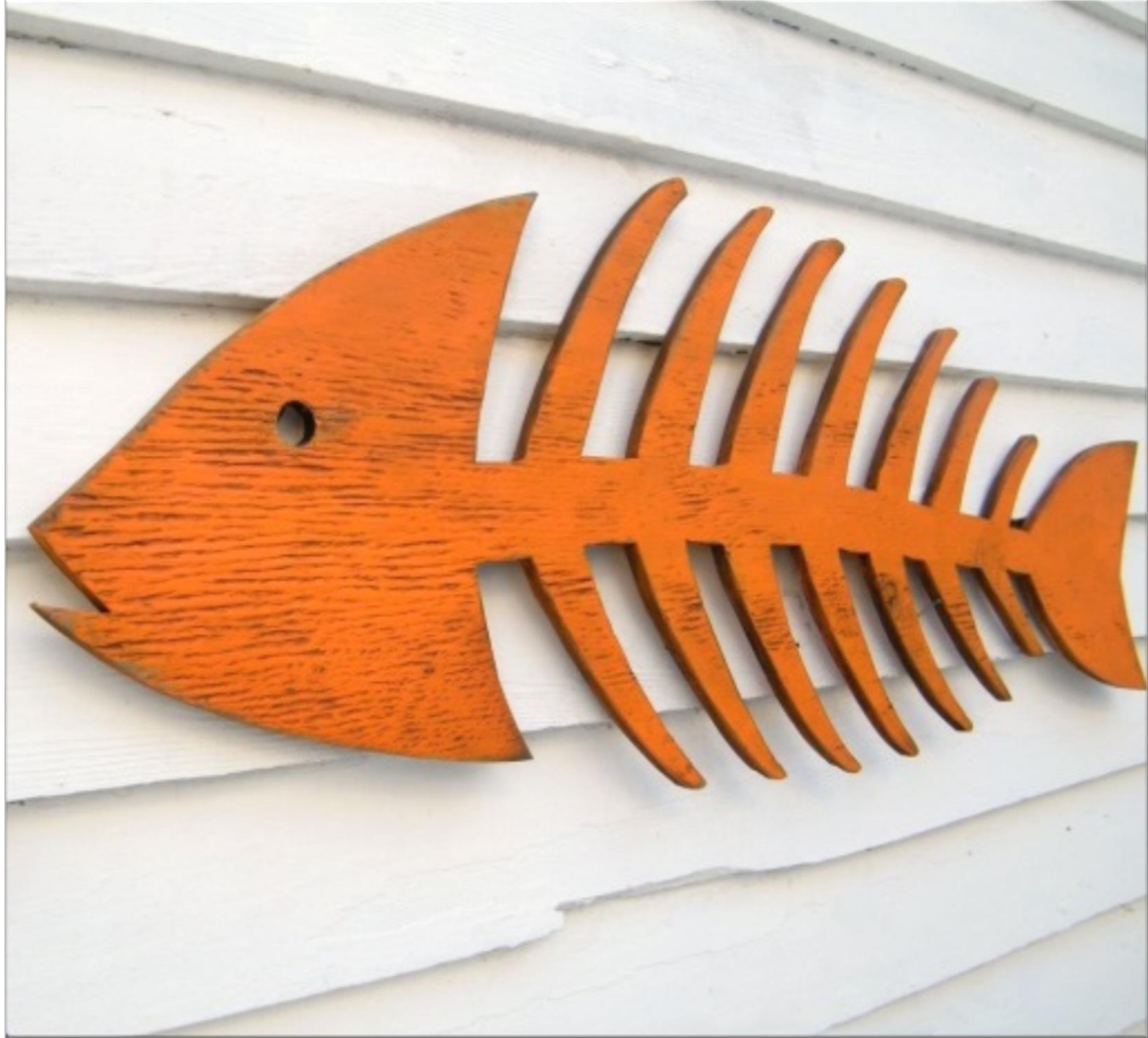
- Virginia Court decided mural on a doggy-day-care business was advertising
- In part because nature of business (dog care) and in part, because cartoon dogs in mural looked a lot like ones on business sign in front of business



Legal Issues – Art or Advertising? (7)

Rule of Thumb ...

- IF “fish” image resembles products or services available at business (seafood restaurant), it’s an ADVERTISING SIGN
- IF “fish” image at an auto dealership, it’s ART





A Test: Art or Advertising Signs?



Sign Considerations & Observations



Downtown Sign Ideas

Explore use of more creative and permanent advertising in Downtown



Downtown Sign Ideas

Explore use of large graphics (super graphics) in Downtown



Downtown Sign Ideas

Explore use of video signage in Downtown

Downtown Sign Ideas

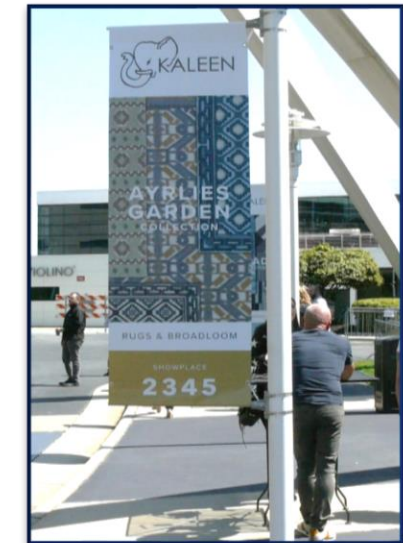
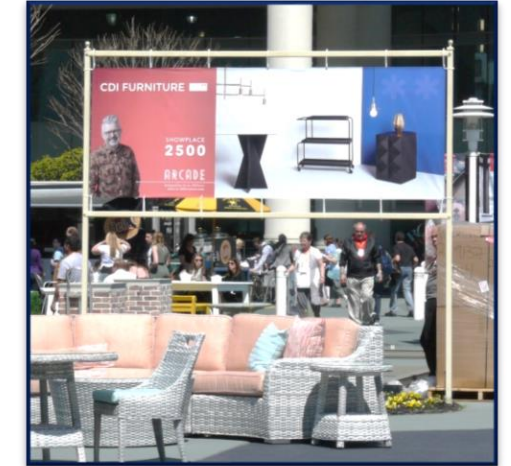
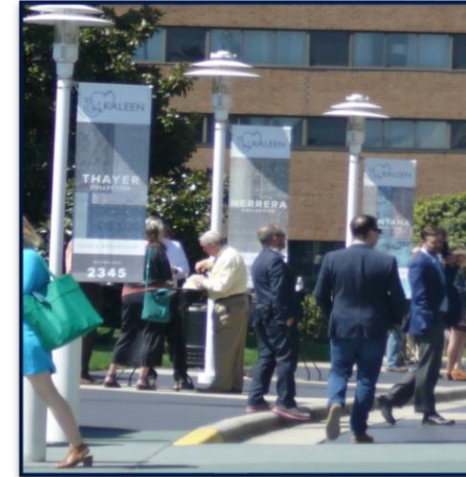
Explore use of projecting signs in Downtown

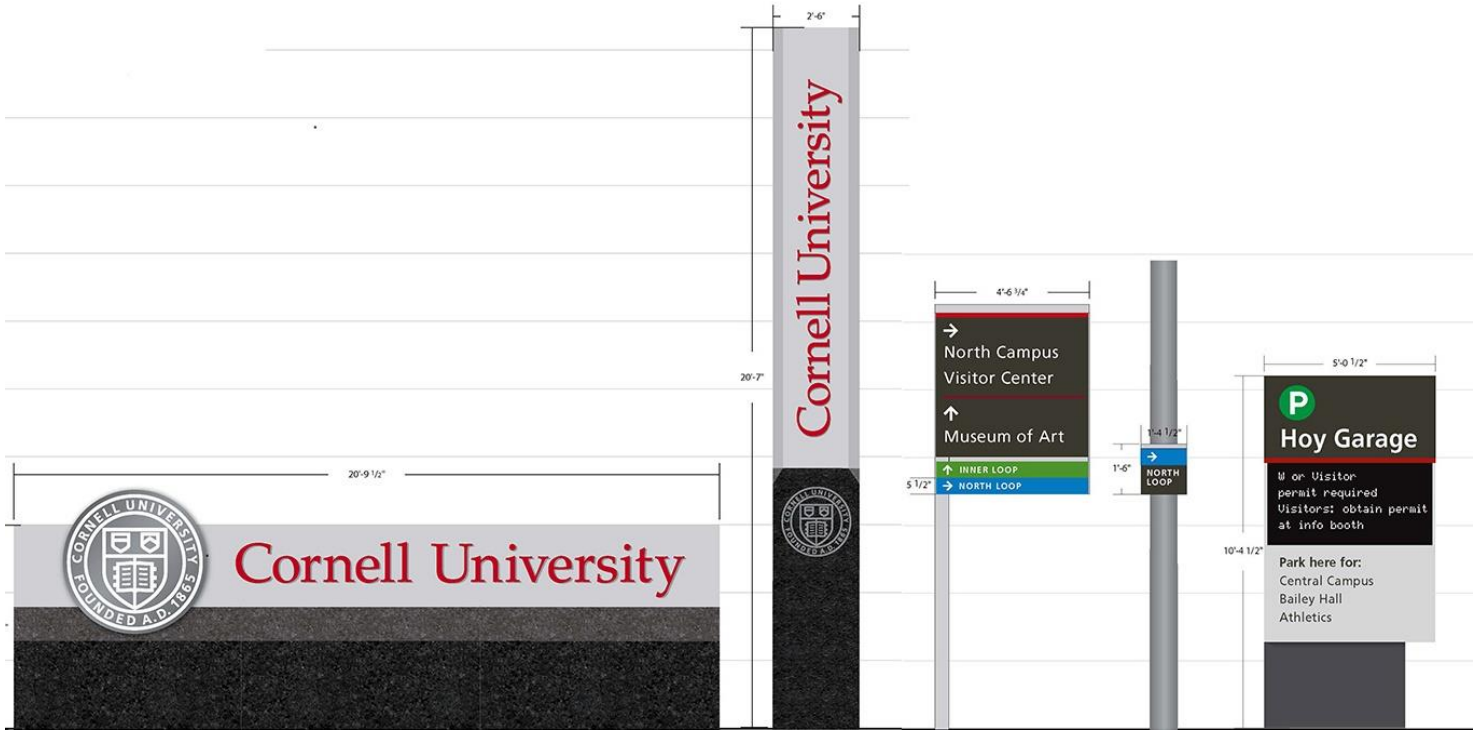
- In lieu of freestanding signs in CB, MS and MX Districts
- May be appropriate in other intense commercial areas of City
- Minimum pedestrian clearance height 10 - 12 feet



Downtown Sign Ideas

Explore designating Furniture Market as a “Unique Sign Event”





“Campus” Sign Plan

Consider ...

- Creating a “Campus” Sign Plan Process for Large, Institutional Land Uses such as ...
 - High Point University
 - GTCC
 - High Point Regional Health System





Common Sign Plan – For Multi-Tenant Commercial/Office Uses

Common Sign Plan

Consider

- Effectiveness of the current “Common Sign Plan” in creating a more unified sign appearance in multi-lot and multi-tenant commercial and office developments
- How signage in “out-parcels” can be better addressed to create more uniformity within the development





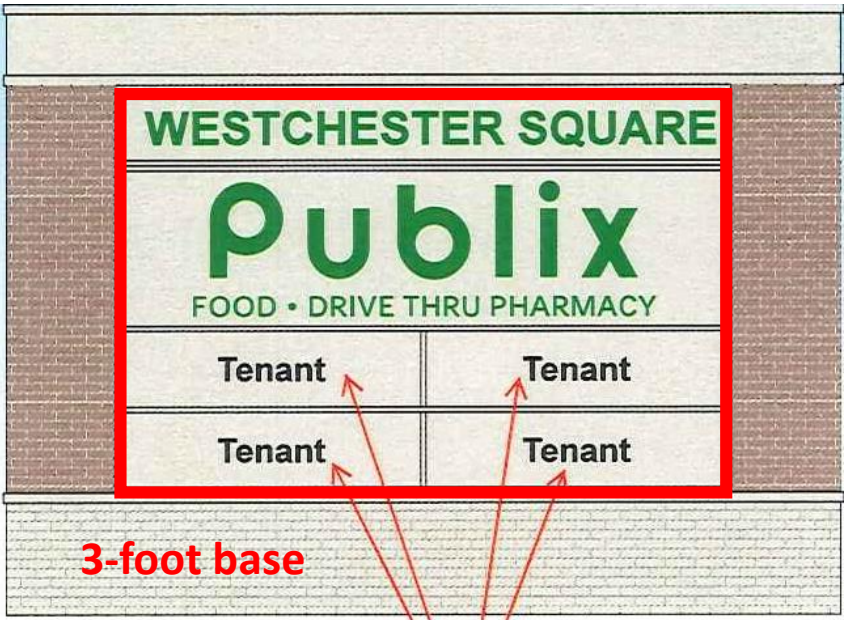
Measuring Sign Size

- Currently – Sign Frame and Sign Base NOT Included in Sign “Area”

Sign Framing Has Large Impact on Sign Size

Sign with Frame

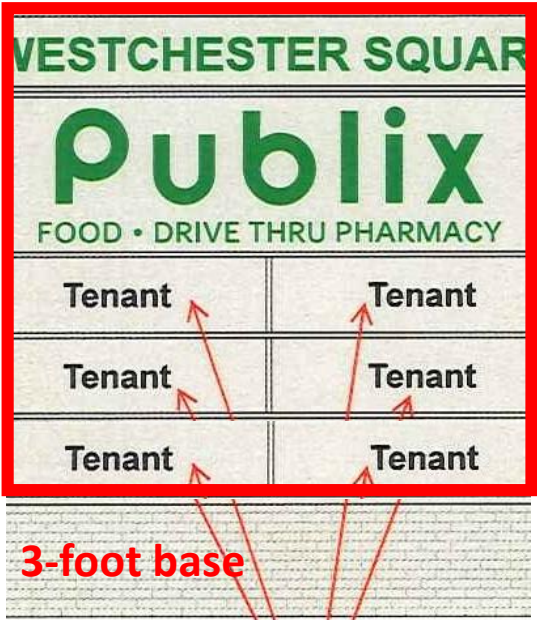
Permitted Sign: 150 sf
Sign + Frame + Base: 300 sf



Sign with No Frame

Permitted Sign: 150 sf
Sign + Base: 187.5 sf

6' Person



Sign Frames and Support Structures

Consider ...

- Monument Signs – All Districts
 - Limiting maximum sign base to 3 feet (currently no height limit)
 - Counting 75% of sign frame (not base) towards allowed sign area (currently no limit on frame size)
- Pole/Pylon Signs – All Districts
 - Examining impact thick pole/pylon supports and thick signs have on increasing sign size (currently no limit)





**Development
Identification Sign**



Development Entrance Sign

Difference Between ...

Needing to revise definitions and standards ...



Instructional and Directional Signs

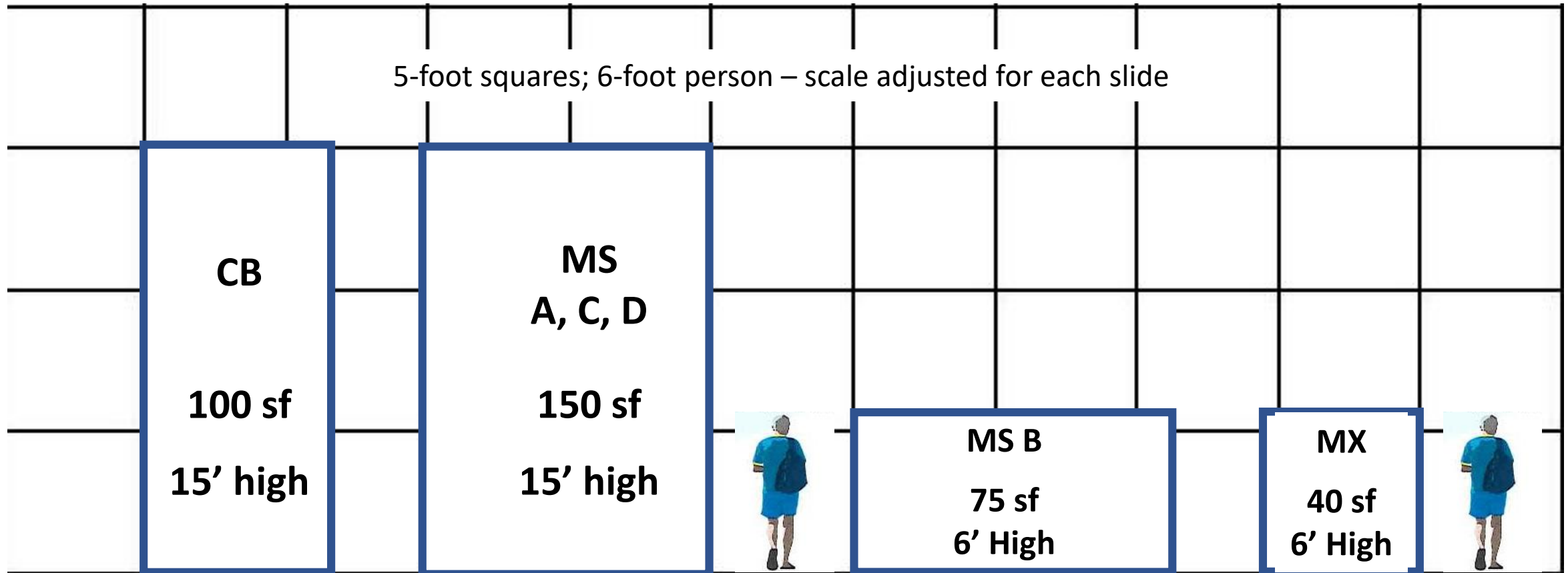
Consider ...

- Clarifying definitions (yes)
- Revising number permitted
- Examining sign area and height
- Determining if permit required



Currently – no limit on number, restricted to 8' feet height and 6 sf

Inside Core City – Monument Signs Not Pedestrian Friendly



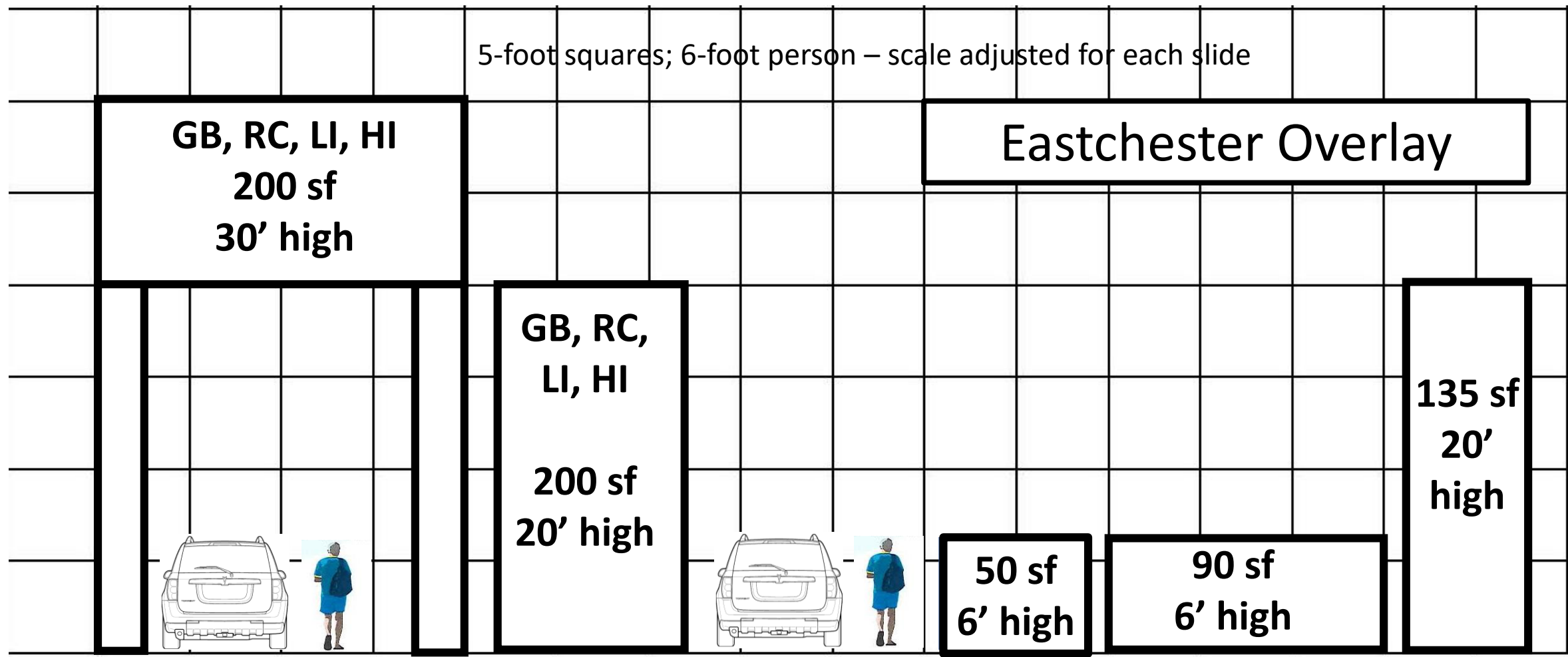
Inside Core: Monument Signs

Consider ...

- CB & MS-C (pedestrian-oriented districts)
 - Reducing monument sign height (from 15')
 - Reducing monument sign area (from 100 sf)
- MS-A and D (auto-oriented)
 - Reducing monument sign height (from 15')
 - Reducing monument sign area (from 150 sf)



Outside Core – GB, RC, LI, HI Districts vs Eastchester



Outside Core

Consider ...

- All Signs – GB, RC, LI, HI
 - Consistency in sign standards across districts
- Monument Signs – GB, RC, LI, HI (not out parcels)
 - Reducing sign height (from 30')
 - Reducing sign area (from 200 sf)
- Pole/Pylon Signs – GB, RC, LI, HI (not out parcels)
 - Reducing sign area (from 200 sf)
 - Reducing sign height (from 30')



Illumination

Consider ...

- Creating a lighting section addressing ALL sign lighting in one place
- Adding performance standards for internal illumination to eliminate Special Use Permit
- Changing terminology from “indirect” and “direct” to “internal” and “external”



Delivery Boxes, Ice Machines, etc.

Consider ...

- Adding a maximum letter or logo size (currently none)
- Or adding a legibility standard (cannot be readable from street)
- Some are accessory uses to primary use so may have different sign standards
- *Note: Bottom two pictures – box on left is an Amazon drop box; box on right is a UPS drop box – very different signage*





Governmental Signs vs Signs on Governmental Buildings

Governmental Signs are exempt ...

- *Sign erected by a governmental body to post a legal notice, identify public property, convey public information or regulate pedestrian or vehicular traffic*

But signs ON Governmental Buildings –
are NOT exempt



Community Events Signs

Consider ...

- Appointing small committee comprised of entities having strong interest in publicizing community-wide events
- Identifying types of community events that would be appropriate for the signs
- Identifying potential locations and associated cost of creating such signage
- Creating policy for managing event signs

Idea arose in public workshops. Goes beyond Sign Ordinance Update but would complement it!



Temporary Signs

Real Estate Signs in Non-Residential

Consider ...

- Reducing permitted sign height (currently 12 feet)
- Limiting sign size in relation to linear feet of lot (currently 100 sf regardless of lot size)
- Requiring a permit for signs exceeding 50 sf (currently no permit required)





Temporary Signs

Address Real Estate Sign Clutter

Consider ...

- Determining whether this type of sign used at major thoroughfare intersections could effectively address real estate sign clutter



Temporary Signs

Window Signs

Consider ...

- Limiting signs on windows to 25% of each window's area
- Counting anything OVER 25% toward wall sign area (downside is this could allow full coverage of windows)





Temporary Signs

Flags

Consider ...

- Moving flags without a commercial message from “exempt” signs to a category of signs that do not require a sign permit keeping the number, height and size standards
- Eliminating provision related to “flags, emblems, insignia of a corporate, political, professional, fraternal, civic, or educational organization permitted in all districts



Temporary Signs

Yard Signs - Residential

Consider

- Consolidating ALL types into ONE type – NON COMMERCIAL
- Limiting number to perhaps 3



Temporary Signs

Special Event and Special Promotion Signs

Consider ...

- Better differentiation between “special event” and “special promotion” signs
- Limiting “special promotion” signs to 14-days three times/year (currently 30-days/three times)
- *Currently signs for “special promotions” have no limit on sign area, height or number*





Enforcement

Enforcement makes civil laws work





Enforcement of High Point's Sign Ordinance is

...

- More complaint driven – than proactive enforcement
- Somewhat inconsistent



Enforcement Should Be ...

- Proactive
- Frequent
- Same rules for everyone
- Enforcement is a sensitive issue but done effectively and consistently will be welcomed!



Context-Sensitive Sign Regulations

Inside the CORE City

- Pedestrian-Oriented Signage
- Specialty Signage
 - Furniture Market
 - Downtown
 - Large Institutional Uses

Outside the CORE City

- Auto-Oriented Signage
- Scenic Corridor Signage (Eastchester Corridor)

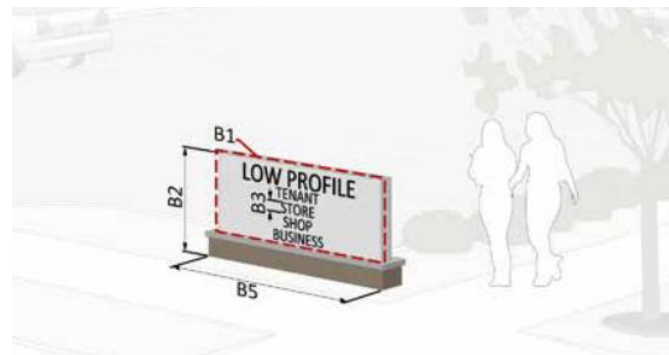
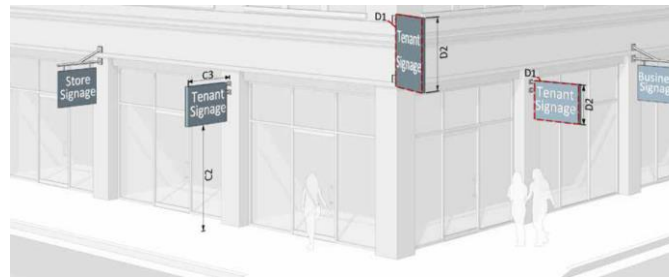
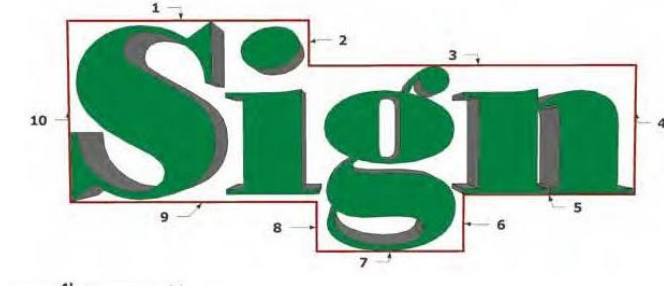


Sample Sign Table – Standards by Inside / Outside Core City

Sign Types Inside / Outside Core	CB – Central Business	MX – Mixed Use	MS – Main Street B & C	MS – Main Street A & D	GB – General Business	GB – Outside Core	RC – Retail Center	RC – Outside Core	LB – Limited Business	LB – Outside Core	EC – Employment Center	EC – Outside Core	OI – Office Institutional	OI – Outside Core	I – Institutional	I – Outside Core	TO – Transitional Office	TO – Outside Core	LI – Light Industrial	LI – Outside Core	HI – Heavy Industrial	HI – Outside Core	AGR – Agricultural / Rural	R – Residential Single Family (3, 5, 7)	RM – Residential Multifamily (5, 16, 24)	PNR – Parks and Natural Resources
Ground Signs (Permit Req.)	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf
Monument – small ≤																										
Monument – medium ≤																										
Monument – large ≤																										
Pole/Pylon/Post – small ≤																										
Pole/Pylon/Post – medium ≤																										
Pole/Pylon/Post – large ≤																										
Development Entry (monument sign sf)																										
Identification (monument sign sf)																										
Building Signs (Permit Req.)	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf	sf
Projecting																										
Projecting (General)																										
Awning or Canopy																										
Blade																										
Hanging / Suspended / Shingle																										
Marquee																										
Roof																										
Wall																										
Wall – small % of wall																										
Wall – medium % of wall																										
Wall – large % of wall																										

Sample – Illustration of Sign Graphics

- Illustrating as to how signs are measured
- Illustrating different types of signs
- Illustrating where signs may be placed in relation to the lot or on the building



Sign Ordinance Completion Schedule

